

## Stimulus Package Funds Thousands of US Transportation Projects

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Construction projects are popping up across the United States as money from President Barack Obama's economic stimulus plan begins flowing to states. The Obama administration says the investment in infrastructure projects will create tens of thousands of jobs and revive the ailing U.S. economy.

From coast to coast, new transportation projects are underway. They are the first to get started with funds from the economic stimulus package approved last month. In Missouri, construction crews are widening a highway and building a new bridge to replace this old one built in 1933. At the site, one supervisor says this will have an immediate economic impact.

"We are looking at about \$640 million worth of work," said a highway worker. "It should generate in the neighborhood of 14,000 jobs."

In Colorado, transportation officials say they also need money to fix the state's crumbling infrastructure. "We have 126 structurally deficient bridges; 115 bridges are 75 years old," said an official.



**Highway construction site in Missouri**

Other states have begun fixing old bridges, paving roads and widening highways already clogged with traffic. The projects are part of \$48 billion in transportation funds contained in President Barack Obama's stimulus package. The largest portion is going towards highway, bridge and road projects. It's the largest new investment in America's infrastructure since the 1950's.

"This investment in highways will create or save 150,000 jobs by the end of next year most of them in the private sector," said the president.

Mr. Obama says more than 200 highway construction



AP Photo

**President Barack Obama makes remarks to representatives of the National Conference of State Legislatures at the White House, 20 Mar 2009**

having to put into mothballs [delay], that takes effect instantly," he said.

The Department of Transportation is using \$8 billion to develop high speed passenger rail corridors that will connect many major cities. Officials say newer and faster trains, which can travel up to 322 kilometers an hour, will ease congestion on the nation's highways and at airports.

The government is also giving the national passenger railroad, Amtrak, \$1.3 billion for infrastructure upgrades and expanding passenger rail capacity.

"We subsidize our highways and airports more than we subsidize Amtrak," said Vice President Joe Biden. "So lets get something straight here - Amtrak has not been 'at the trough.' Amtrak has been left out much too long."

Obama administration officials say not only will the transportation dollars boost construction jobs but it will also spark development long after the projects are complete.

projects have been launched since he signed the reinvestment and recovery plan last month. Some of the funding will go to mass transit and improvements to the nation's airports.

Some state officials say the stimulus money is coming at the right time as some communities had halted or delayed road work amid the economic downturn.

Economist Robert Kuttner says infrastructure projects are already having an impact on the economy. "If you just help state and local governments to not lay off anybody and not defer any [transportation] projects that they are



**Robert Kuttner**